

APPENDIX F

PUBLIC, COURT, AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION INPUT TO THE TASK FORCE

- Part 1: Task force meeting dates and locations
- Part 2: Public comments made at task force meetings
- Part 3: Court presentations made at task force meetings

PART 1: TASK FORCE MEETING DATES AND LOCATIONS

The task force conducted fourteen monthly meetings beginning in May 1997 through October 1998. The task force and subgroups thereof also met occasionally by telephone conference between its regularly scheduled meetings. A list of specific meeting dates and locations follows:

Date	LOCATION	
May 21, 1997	Doubletree Hotel	Burlingame, CA
June 16, 1997	Doubletree Hotel	Sacramento, CA
July 7, 1997	Administrative Office of the Courts	San Francisco, CA
August 25, 1997	Renaissance Hotel	Los Angeles, CA
September 15, 1997	Radisson Hotel	San Diego, CA
October 20, 1997	Four Points Sheraton	Fresno, CA
November 19, 1997	Administrative Office of the Courts	San Francisco, CA
January 14, 1998	John Wayne Airport	Orange County, CA
February 11, 1998	Hyatt Regency Hotel	Los Angeles, CA
May 21, 1998	Hyatt Regency Hotel	Los Angeles, CA
June 23, 1998	Holiday Inn	Chico, CA
August 4, 1998	Water Front Plaza Hotel	Oakland, CA
September 14, 1998	Embassy Suites Hotel	Los Angeles, CA
September 28, 1998	Embassy Suites Hotel	Los Angeles

PART 2: PUBLIC COMMENTS MADE AT TASK FORCE MEETINGS

The speakers who appeared before the task force spoke to a wide-ranging agenda, some of it highly personal, some of it specific to the role of the courts, including suggestions for improvement. Their *specific comments* are categorized and summarized below.

Access

- ◆ Comments about the lack of balance in the task force's membership
- ◆ Complaints lodged about the lack of access to the courts by individuals of limited economic means, and particularly by female victims of domestic violence
- ◆ Complaints lodged about the bureaucracy of the courts, the inefficiency of the AOC, problems in procedural law, and court administrative mistakes
- ◆ Complaints lodged about politically motivated manipulation of the law; the frustrations of the ordinary citizen with the expense and complications of legal proceedings, and the lack of civility and helpfulness demonstrated by court employees
- ◆ Report offered on the problem of maintaining age diversity in recruiting grand juries
- ◆ Complaints about the 5-day advance notification required for cameras in the courtroom – specifically that such requirements are “unrealistic,” and that authorization forms are “duplicative and complex”
- ◆ Requests that the courts focus more attention on the increased number of pro per litigants and ways of addressing their needs
- ◆ Complaints about the intimidation factor experienced by many citizens who visit the courts – including the necessity of passing through metal detectors
- ◆ Complaints that the court does not speak to the public in plain language

Fairness

- ◆ Complaints lodged on the loss of focus on “justice” in the justice system
- ◆ Complaints lodged about gender bias in the courts, particularly in child custody cases
- ◆ Recommendation that the task force members read the book, *Whores of the Court*, regarding problems related to court-appointed investigators.
- ◆ Arguments offered for more stringent judicial review
- ◆ Complaints about police and court insensitivity to the needs of female victims of domestic violence
- ◆ Complaints lodged about judges who do not seem to understand the special needs of those living with disabilities – specifically those individuals whose experience includes ADR, hyperactivity, mental retardation, and developmental delay

- ◆ Private citizen complaint about a specific murder case and attendant alleged cover-ups
- ◆ Private citizen complaint about the difficulty immigrants encounter in obtaining police protection from neighborhood harassment
- ◆ Complaints that the court does not adequately address race, class and cultural differences

Collaboration

- ◆ Report offered on the activities of the blue-ribbon Commission on the Court Improvement Initiative – an initiative comprised of judicial officers, members of the L.A. Bar association, and professors from U.S.C.
- ◆ Summary offered on a local task force report delivered to the San Diego County supervisors in January '97
- ◆ Report on the “Solutions ‘97” conference of September 13, 1997
- ◆ Complaints lodged about the lack of communication between the courts and agencies responsible for coordinating court-ordered community service sentences, specifically that those sentenced aren’t always clear on how to complete their sentences due to illiteracy
- ◆ Local courts praised for their openness and community outreach
- ◆ Recommendations in favor of drug court, small claims mediation, downtown clean-up, and graffiti eradication programs
- ◆ Recommendations that the courts tap the resources of local chambers of commerce more often
- ◆ Recommendations in favor of court-sponsored meetings of foster agencies to develop communication and collaboration

Education

- ◆ Suggestions offered for publicizing the task force’s work to the public
- ◆ Suggestions offered for using the media to publicize the task force’s work
- ◆ Concerns expressed about education standards in public schools
- ◆ Arguments offered for the mandatory education of incarcerated youth
- ◆ A review offered of programs offered by the Constitutional Rights Foundation and its educational outreach in local schools (mock trial, peer court and Law Day)

ADR

- ◆ Arguments in favor of the mediation process as a means of saving the courts time and money
- ◆ Appeals that the task force support the courts’ direct use of mediation services

Other

- ◆ Inquiries about the task force’s efforts to include the public in its meetings

- ◆ Complaints about excessive police violence that results in death
- ◆ Arguments offered for a domestic violence guardian program
- ◆ Report offered on the efforts of the Juvenile Justice Commission and its efforts to ensure the safety and well being of children
- ◆ Arguments offered in favor of court-ordered community service sentencing
- ◆ Arguments offered about the need to improve practices of procedural law
- ◆ Comments about the obligation of the task force to work for the highest spiritual good of all
- ◆ Testimony in favor of the practice of “bundling cases” in family court
- ◆ Complaints about the rules of court – specifically the fact that only the district attorney can charge an individual with a crime
- ◆ Private citizen arguments in favor of the political agenda posed by the “Patriot Community”
- ◆ Private citizen complaints about having been accused of jury tampering and the court’s unwillingness to consider personal circumstances in deciding such matters

PART 3: COURT PRESENTATIONS MADE AT TASK FORCE MEETINGS

Alameda County

Mr. Ron Overholt, Court Executive Officer, provided an overview of the outreach and court improvement programs offered by the Alameda courts. They included:

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| • Customer Service Training | • Website |
| • Diversity Training | • Informational Voicemail System |
| • Family Violence Council | • Pro Per Help Centers |
| • Volunteer Guardianship Monitoring | • ADR Program |

Butte County

Hon. Darrell Stevens, a member of the task force, was asked to present information about Butte County Courts’ community outreach activities. Judge Stevens presented information about five projects, not including the drug court or domestic violence court:

- Graffiti Eradication Program
- Revia Alcohol Treatment Program
- Downtown Cleanup Program
- Small Claims Mediation Project
- Small Claims Court Goes to School

Sacramento County

Hon. Rudolph “Barry” Loncke, also a member of the task force, was asked to report on the court community outreach activities in which the Sacramento courts are involved.

Judge Loncke reported that Sacramento has over 30 programs that are “judge-involved”/“court-involved programs” that can be considered under the aegis of community outreach. Judge Loncke reviewed seven programs:

- Sacramento Youthful Visitation Program
- The Drugstore Program, an drug abuse education program for youth
- Healthy Teen Mothers Program
- Family Assistance in the Home (FAITH), a juvenile mentoring program
- National Vietnam Veterans Standdown
- Fourth and Fifth Hour: Rights and Responsibilities Under the Law, an educational program
- Prime Time Teen Program, an educational program on early childhood development

Ventura County

Ms. Sheila Gonzalez, Court Executive Officer, distributed materials representing the efforts of the Ventura courts. The mission statement of the Ventura courts is, “Our courts are here for the people we serve-dignity, respect, excellence, communication, pride in all we do.” The courts are very service oriented. Ms. Gonzalez emphasized that the first concern was to take care of the “nuts and bolts”-phones being answered, efficient movement of waiting lines, timely processing of citations, and so on. She went on to list the many outreach, access, and customer service activities conducted by the Superior Court of California, County of Ventura. These included:

- Speakers Bureau
- Courthouse to Schoolroom project
- Teen court.
- Drug court.
- Multi-door courthouse
- Kiosks
- Children’s waiting room
- Pro per clinic
- Referral hot line
- Satisfaction surveys and exit interviews

Ms Gonzalez also reported that the Ventura courts received the Arthur Anderson “Best In Customer Service Award” in 1996. The Superior Court of California, County of Ventura is the first public agency recognized by the private sector for such an award.

California Judges Association

Judge Patricia Spear of the Los Angeles Municipal Court addressed the task force as a member of the California Judges’ Association Committee on Public Information and Education (PIE).

Judge Spear provided an overview of the role of the CJA. Within the overall purpose of the organization, the PIE committee is charged with providing leadership to (1) increase public understanding and awareness of the courts, (2) increase public confidence in the judiciary, (3) provide direction to solve the problems and shortcomings of the system, and (4) foster and encourage direct involvement of judges in public information education.

PIE has produced a variety of community forums, publications, videos, handbooks, and media conferences to fulfill their charge. They include:

- “Courts and the Media” handbook
- Jury Manual
- “Welcome to Your Courts” brochure in English and Spanish
- Videos about juvenile law and children’s rights
- A speaker’s handbook for judges use in public speaking events
- A legislative staff handbook